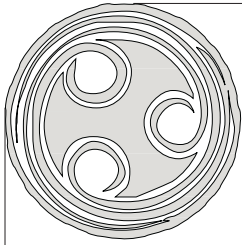


Lessons on Missional Living

The Faith of a Friend

James 5:19-20



sermonnotes

Introduction

What is a friend? Have you thought of that? Is it a person who is always encouraging? Is it a person who is always critical? Or is a friend a person that loves you and cares for you enough to be both? We are in the last two verses of James, but they are verses that are loaded with the truth of the gospel. We should love our friends enough to want to see them come to a saving relationship with God. Jesus Christ is the only name under heaven by which man is saved (**Acts 4:12**), and it is imperative that we live our lives as a beacon to the truth of the gospel, and the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

From The Head...

We must live our lives by developing spiritual friendships for the sake of the gospel. Paul indicated that he was willing to suffer for the sake of the elect (**2 Timothy 2:10**). This is not something that is good for Paul, and not for us. It is a way of life for believers. Everything we do must have the gospel in the forefront and our love for God and others as our motivation.

Apostasy is a Reality (5:19a)

Paul begins with the term he has used throughout, "brothers." It is his constant reminder that he is speaking dearly to his family, the body of Christ. Jesus gave us ample warning in His parable of the sower (**Matthew 13; Luke 8**). Anyone who has been in the faith long enough knows someone who has left the faith. Internet atheists are quick to give their testimonies of, "I once was saved, but now I'm lost" with pride. Most often these failures result from doctrinal impurity and/or moral impurity, which often are interrelated. We can justify anything once we have deceived ourselves to believe it. The words of the great theologian George Costanza ring true here, "*Remember, it's not a lie if you believe it.*" There is some concerned as to whether these apostates were believers who had lost their salvation. **1 John 2:19** helps us understand that the apostates are those who were "From us, but were not really of us." There are many in the church who are honestly seeking, and there are others that are simply posers. In the end, it is God who will sift the wheat from the tares, and the sheep from the goats. It is not our place to judge, just to preach, to worship God, and to act in the fullness of the body of Christ (the church). The Church needs to be an open place, but there are many who are there for the wrong reasons. Perhaps they haven't really trusted Christ but maybe have trusted religion, people, denominationalism, good works, etc.

Restoration is a Mandate (5:19b-20)

Being involved in people's lives and restoring them to their creator is the greatest calling any human can endeavor to take part in. When we do, two things happen.

1. A soul is saved from spiritual death (**5:20a**).
2. A person is freed from a multiple of sins (**5:20b**).

Apart from restoration, a person is enslaved to their passions and living a life a part from their creator. It doesn't mean they aren't spiritual and necessarily hate God, but they--like the pagan Greeks in **Acts 17**--are ignorant of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. In order for us to care for and reclaim people for Christ's sake there are a few things we must do.

1. We must love people instead of abandoning them.
2. We must have the integrity to live the life that we are challenging others to live.
3. We must be people of prayer.
4. We must be willing to confront one another.
5. We must be willing to bear one another's burdens (**Galatians 6:1-3**).

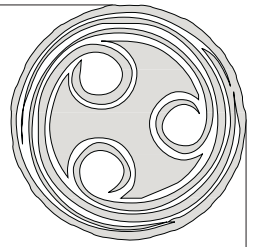
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6. We must be willing, as a last resort, to exercise spiritual discipline (**Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5**) in order to restore them to the faith.

Community means that we will walk the extra mile with one another, promise to pray for one another, and help bear each others sin and burdens in order to help one another find Christ and grow in His grace. Once again, a true friend is one who cares enough to confront and to speak the truth of God in love in order to see them restored to faith and made whole again (see **2 Timothy 2:25-26**).

sermonnotes

... To The Heart



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